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INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT Organization of Pechora Prison Camp

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1. Q. Tell me about the prison labor units that were used to build the railroad.

A. The railroad from Kozhva to Vorkuta was started in 1940 and finished in November of 1943. The common name for the big camp that did the work was Pechlag, and it had the secret Soviet number 44-1. This is how the camp fit into the Soviet organization:

GULAG Glavnoye Upravleniye Lageroy (Principal Administration of Prison Camps). A division of MVD administering all prison camps, except probably the PW camps.

GZHDSt Glavnoye Upravleniye Zhелезнодорожного Строительного (Principal Administration of Railroad Construction). A subdivision of GULAG, administering only those camps concerned with the construction of railroads.

Lager Prison camp, the next smaller unit under GZHDSt.

Pechlag Pechora Lager

OZHDt Odno Zhелезнодорожного Транспорта (Railroad Transport Branch). The subdivision of each lager concerned with the actual operation of the trains on the line being built by the lager.

PchDS Pechora Zhелезнодорожного Строительного (Pechora Railroad Construction Unit). A subdivision of Pechlag (Pechora Lager) concerned with the construction of the railroad.

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.....Ministerstvo Putey Svyazobcheniya (Ministry of the Ways of Communication). Ministry of Communications. It takes over the administration and operation of railroads when they have been completed by a layer.

2. Q. Was Pechora a big prison camp?

A. When I left there were about 80 thousand prisoners, and everybody worked on the railroad. In addition, 20% of the railroad workers were supplied by the Ministry of Communications. Some of these railroad men, especially in 1942 and 1943, were free people from the Baltic countries. They received a very decent salary. But most of the conductors, firemen and engineers were supplied from the three transport units of the camp and had been railroad workers before becoming prisoners. They used to travel from their home station to the next railroad transport unit, and then go home on the next train. The first transport unit was in Pechora, the second in Kochmen, and the third in Sivaya Maska.

3. Q. Where was the headquarters of the camp?

A. The name of Pechora Prison Camp applies to the entire distance from the Pechora river to Vorhut, but the headquarters of the camp was in Abon, a town of six or seven thousand population. This is where the equipment and supplies are located. There is another supply center at Pechora. There were construction sub-divisions with headquarters at Kar-Yu and Kochmen. There were five construction divisions in all. Presumably at Pechora, Kar-Yu, Kochmen, Abon, and Vorhut. There was a waterways unit of Pechlag at Kenen Nos, four km north of the railroad on the Pechora river. Three km from the railroad, on the east bank, is a large forest combine called Les Kombinat, which belongs to Pechlag. There was also a coal mining command at Intlag, but that was a separate administration, under GULAG.

4. Q. How about the prison farms?

A. The largest dairy farm of the whole Pechora Prison Camp is called Fion. It is six km east of Abon. There are other dairy farms just south of the railroad on the east bank of the Pechora, eight km upstream from the railroad on the river Sibya, and about 10 km from the bridge which crosses the Koshin river. The prison camp also has a reindeer farm about 10 km northeast of Sivaya Maska, and a lumber mill on the Pechora river. The Intlag coal mine has a separate dairy farm, at Shchetrovashir.

5. Q. What do they do with the prisoners when construction is finished?

A. When the Pechora road is finished they will send many of them to Siberia, especially the long-term prisoners who cannot go back to one of the less severe camps in the interior of Russia. Many of the prisoners at Pechora were sent there when the railroad at Murmansk was finished. Some of them were later sent to the Caucasus to work on a railroad there. They were sent from one camp to another by the trainload.

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